

SPEECH OF DR. NAJMA HEPTULLA, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF MANIPUR AT THE XIITH STATE LEVEL MANIPUR PINEAPPLE FESTIVAL ON 23RD AUGUST, 2019 AT KHOUSABUNG, CHURACHANDPUR DISTRICT, MANIPUR.

Shri Th. Shyamkumar Singh ji, Hon'ble Minister, Horticulture & Soil Conservation,

Shri V. Hangkhanlian ji, Hon'ble Minister, Veterinary & Animal Husbandry,

Shri T.T. Haokip ji, Hon'ble Chairman, Hill Areas Committee,

Hon'ble MLAs and other dignitaries on the dais,

All participating pineapple farmers,

Friends from Print and Electronic Media,

Distinguished Invitees,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a matter of great pleasure for me to be here on the occasion of the 12th State Level Pineapple Festival, 2019 organised by the Manipur Pineapple Festival Committee. I am particularly happy to see the large gathering of pineapple farmers who have put their delectable produce on display. My heartiest greetings to the organizers and participants for making this important function possible.

Festivals are organized to serve a definite purpose and the objective of the Manipur Pineapple Festival is to empower the pineapple farmers, bring them to a common platform, search for viable markets, promote agro-tourism and generally foster the spirit of unity and brotherhood. In the 11 years since its inception, the festival is slowly but surely moving towards achieving its set objectives. It is common knowledge that pineapple is one of the most important horticulture crops in Manipur and a large number of people in the State are dependent on it for their livelihood. There are different varieties of pineapple like Queen, Kew found in the State and it is a favourite fruit for many because of its flavor and health quotient. There is a large potential for economic activity based on this horticulture crop to increase the income of

the farmers. Demand is never an issue and there is a need to produce more, while simultaneously taking up processing so that the fruits remain available throughout the year to enhance its economic viability. The shelf life of the fruit is rather short and the transportation cost in the State is forbiddingly high and as such, while some percentage of this wonderful produce gets consumed in the State, plenty gets wasted. In order to overcome this negative aspect, I have been advocating to encourage processed pineapple for a longer shelf life. As Manipur is blessed with good sunshine, I have even suggested encouraging our womenfolk to produce sundried pineapple slices for commercial purpose. It is important to develop the easily marketable products like canned pineapple slices, concentrate, extract and in powder form so that the transportation cost comes down and the fruit in a good form is available to national and international consumers year round. This will result in reduction of risk for our farming community while making good economic gains.

It is very encouraging that the cultivators of Khousabung and adjoining villages have been growing pineapple for more than six decades and it has been a major source of their income. I hope this year's festival will also be as successful as the previous years and wish the organizers all success in their endeavour. Such festivals with a competitive spirit will enhance the performance of the farmers at different levels. I have also found that the pineapple of Manipur is more palatable and delicious than those I have taken elsewhere. It is also much sought after outside the State. I have been told that there was good export of pineapple from this State to other countries also not long ago. I do not know why it has been discontinued but every effort should be made by all concerned to expand this export avenue and make it a commercially successful venture. This fruit could rank as a good revenue earner for the State.

I am happy to see that Pineapple Festivals are gaining much popularity in the State. For the pineapple farming community, the festival means a lot as they get an opportunity for wider exposure of their products. The people living in the interior parts of the State and the hilly areas have to transport their products to the District Headquarters and State capital for sale. Herein, lies the importance of good transportation system for the farmers to succeed and earn good returns. Cold storage facility would be one big boon to the pineapple farmers for better revenue and making their life a lot easier. I understand that the State Government is already planning to provide cold storage facility at different places of the State. I am confident that, with the efforts of the Government, the problem faced by the farmers of not only a particular District but also of all other areas, especially those living in the interior parts of the State will be eased to a great extent.

I thank the organizers for inviting me to this function and wish the Pineapple Festival a grand success.

Thank you,

Jai Hind.